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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/09/2016

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SUBJECT: LUKASHENKO CRITICIZES U.S. BUT SEEKS GREATER  
PARTNERSHIP

Classified By: Charge Jonathan Moore For Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) Summary: President Lukashenko, meeting with his Belarusian Ambassadors August 1, stated that increased U.S.-EU harassment was due to Belarus' increasing geopolitical importance and its role in forming a multi-polar world. The President claimed Belarus was ready for bilateral partnerships with the U.S. but not if the U.S. continued its "non-constructive" campaign of interference and threats to Belarus' sovereignty. Lukashenko suggested the GOB and state media take the higher road by reacting calmly to U.S. statements and offering criticism based on facts. End Summary.

Belarus' Foreign Policy Imperatives  
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12. (U) On August 1, Lukashenko told his ambassadors from all Belarusian diplomatic missions during an annual conference that Belarus was "actively contributing" to the international community's movement to a multi-polar world. However, Belarus' increasing geopolitical importance has made it a target of EU and U.S. pressure. Lukashenko stressed that Belarus would pursue its own political course and not act in the interests of the West in exchange for "table scraps." He then boasted that the "so-called Belarus issue" was not mentioned at the July 15 G-8 Summit because the "responsible" politicians attending the Summit knew that Belarus was not an issue compared to the conflicts in the Middle East.

Ready For Better Relations With West, But With Conditions  
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13. (U) Lukashenko maintained Belarus was ready for mutually beneficial partnerships with the U.S. and EU based on universal values, including respect for each nation's independence and the people's right to choose their government. Lukashenko praised a two-fold increase in Belarus-U.S. trade and claimed Belarus wanted closer partnerships with the U.S. in the fights on terrorism, trans-border crime, human trafficking and drugs. (Note: Current trade volume between Belarus and the U.S. totaled USD 380 million in 2005.)

14. (U) However, Lukashenko warned that such partnerships could not be reached if the U.S. continues its "non-constructive" political pressure, threats, interference, and disrespect for Belarusians. He added that Belarus would not follow the West's model of using military force and economic sanctions against "unwanted countries" to "kill" their peaceful populations.

State Media "Urged" To Lighten Up On The West  
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15. (U) To improve relations with the U.S., Lukashenko suggested the GOB react calmly to U.S. statements and return criticism in a civilized manner based on facts. Criticism of the U.S. should be "worth it" and not focused on trifles that "irritate the U.S. Embassy" and Belarusian partners residing in the U.S.

Comment

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16. (C) Lukashenko's colorful presentation, published in state newspapers and on the presidential website, was overburdened by the typical idiosyncrasies that for the last few months have been absent from his speeches. Throughout the speech he mocked the U.S., EU, and Russia, but simultaneously called for partnerships with them. Lukashenko exaggerated Belarus' world status and "activeness" in the international arena. Whatever the reason behind his return to "normal" behavior, which of course has not been matched by any "reaching out" to this Embassy, Lukashenko definitely found his place on the soapbox.

Moore